

**PASTORAL ANTHROPOLOGY BEYOND THE  
PARADIGM OF MEDIEVAL THINKING:  
FROM ‘CURA ANIMARUM’ (THE ANTHROPOLOGY  
OF SUBSTANTIAL THINKING AND *NOUS*) TO  
‘CURA VITAE’ (THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF SYSTEMS  
THINKING AND *PHRONĒSIS*)**

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**Abstract**

*The philosophy of the middle ages can be described as the period of scholasticism. Scholasticism is a technical term for the period wherein the Christian faith and doctrine started to merge with the paradigms of ancient, Hellenistic philosophy. The paradigms of Plato and Aristotle were transformed into the language of Christian spirituality. Within the tension between faith and reason, systematic reflection was predominantly determined by metaphysical and substantial thinking. Anthropology was influenced by the so called ‘object subject’ split and the dualism between the spiritual realm and the material realm. The dominant methodological paradigm of 21<sup>st</sup> century thinking is hermeneutics and its connectedness to the concept of systemic networking. It is argued that the implication of this paradigm shift for theory formation in pastoral anthropology and spiritual healing is the reframing of the classic formula of cura animarum (soul as substance). In order to introduce a holistic approach to ‘wholeness’ in spiritual healing, the notion of cura vitae (soul as habitus within a qualitative network of relationships: the living human web) is proposed.*

**Key Words:** Pastoral Anthropology, Pastoral Care and Counselling, Medieval Philosophy, Substantial Thinking, Systemic and Network Thinking, *Cura Animarum*, *Cura Vitae*

It was the philosopher CA van Peursen who divided the philosophical and cultural development of human thought into three periods. (a) The mythical period refers to the animistic worldview. In this worldview the human being is totally absolved by the social and natural environment and exposed to animistic powers. (b) In the ontological or metaphysical period the human being (animal rationale), is distanced from things. He/she is becoming a subject who can distance him/herself from the immediate environment. This rational process of critical distancing became the so called ‘subject-object split’. The ‘what-question’ became predominant, as well as the essence of being or reality. In terms of metaphysical thinking substantial reality and the dimension of the transcendent became the object of critical reflection. (c) Within the functional period the substances were becoming unreal, far away and distant. Things no longer exist in themselves; they are no longer substances, but exist in and for the sake of what they do to us and what we do with them. One can say that the nouns of the ontological era become the verbs of the functional era. The fundamental ques-

tion became: how? (d) At the end of the twentieth century, and as the twenty first century is unfolding, due to the influence of technology, film and media, the internet and our market driven economy, we are entering the stage of global networking and digitalization. The what- and how-question is gradually making place for the relativistic question of deconstruction: Why this and then? As well as the hermeneutical question: the intention and meaningful framework within human actions (intentionality within behavioural experiences and performance)? In this regard virtual reality and hermeneutical interconnectedness/networking are playing a decisive role. Connections and relationships determine meaning, essence and functionality. Everything became relative. The age of postmodern thinking and global networking set in the moment when Einstein formulated the Principle of Relativity: "There is no absolute motion" (Johnson 1983:3-4).<sup>1</sup>

The question at stake is: How does this paradigm shift influence and determine theory formation and methodology? It is my contention that scientific research is embedded in theory. Behind practical models, there is a theory. In pastoral care, theory is closely related to anthropology: how we view human beings determine communication, counselling and the eventual possible changes and outcome of 'healing'. For example: if human beings are perceived as sinners and therefore fundamentally being sinful, healing implies conversion and the forgiveness of sins.

The basic hypothesis of the article is that anthropology in a theology of pastoral care was deeply influenced by the substantial and metaphysical thinking of medieval philosophy. Due to important paradigmatic changes in methodology, re-conceptualization in the science of pastoral anthropology is challenged by hermeneutical thinking and the notion of networking. In this regard the theory of systems thinking can play a decisive role.

### Features of Medieval Thinking

It is indeed a difficult task to classify medieval philosophy. According to C Platt (1985:7) it might still be argued where to start because the term 'middle ages' is a technical term for the period wherein the Christian faith and doctrine started to merge with the paradigms of ancient, Hellenistic philosophy (Störig 1972<sup>2</sup>:201). The period of the scholastic (800 AD) followed the period of the patristic (100-800 AD) and indicated a break with the golden age of classical Greece and Rome.

According to MacDonald & Kretzmann (1998:2) the terms 'medieval' and 'Middle Ages' derive from the Latin expression *medium aevum* (the Middle Age), coined by Renaissance humanists. It refers to the period separating the golden age of classical Greece and Rome from what they saw as the rebirth of classical ideas in their own day. In fact, the period actually corresponds with the history of Latin West. MacDonald & Kretzmann (1998:2) and takes 'medieval philosophy' as designating primarily the philosophy of the Latin West from about AD 400-1400. This is more or less in line with Platt (1985:7) who assigned to the Middle Ages the period from the end of the first Christian millennium to 1500 AD.

In a very recent article, DFM Strauss (2010:123-144) questioned substantial thinking in systematic theology and its impact on our understanding of God. In this article I want to respond to the challenge and pose the following question: Is substantial thinking a valid

<sup>1</sup> "At the beginning of the 1920s the belief began to circulate, for the first time at a popular level, that there were no longer any absolutes: of time and space, of good and evil, of knowledge, above all of value. Mistakenly but perhaps inevitably, relativity became confused with relativism" (Johnson 1983:4).

option for a pastoral anthropology and our interpretation of the human 'soul' in a pastoral hermeneutics?

The Stoic philosophy from Epicurus was not so much interested in the question of beyond. The significance and meaning of human life should be sought in life itself, thus the focus is on the restructuring of life. Plato turned philosophy towards the beyond of the idea or form and the transcendent realm of life (Störig 1972<sup>2</sup>:205).

Christian theological reflection in the history of the church was deeply influenced by the notion of the incarnation of Christ (God becoming flesh in his Son). Christian spirituality became more captured by the world beyond and was less interested in this worldly realm (the *saeculum*). Due to the influence of Gnosticism, a dualism was introduced into Christian spirituality, i.e. the dualism between the spiritual realm and the physical or material world. The implication is that human embodiment fell prey to sinfulness while the human soul becomes the battlefield for the eternal agony between good and evil. There exists even a schism within God Himself, the separation between God the creator of this evil world and God the redeemer from this evil world. This dualism fueled what is known the question of theodicy; i.e. the attempt to justify God and his love in the light of the realm of evil. Access to the mystical realm of the beyond is possible by means of a very special gnosis or insight (mystical enlightenment).

Due to inter alia the influence of Manichaeism, the dualistic schism between the realm of the light and the realm of the darkness was established in Christian spiritual thinking during the patristic period. Manichaeism even determined the notion and understanding of God. While Arius (336) argued that Jesus as the Son of God has a minor and subordinate position to God, Athanasius maintained that Jesus was God from eternity and one with the Divine.

St Augustine was captured by the notion of the human soul and was one of the first Western thinkers in Christian spirituality who probed into the abyss of the human soul and the dimension of the subconscious/unconscious. Due to our being captured by time, the human being is exposed to evil. The human body and sexuality (erotic enjoyment and the principle of pleasure) became the showground of sinfulness and vulnerability.

The period of the patristic set the background for the period of scholastic and medieval thinking. The core issue at stake was not to discover truth as a given reality, but to find truth and to explain truth by means of the human reason/nous (Störig 1972<sup>2</sup>:227). The emphasis shifted from access to truth to clarity of the content of faith by means of reason, thus the attempt to systematize the truth.

The following issues portray more or less the features and characteristics of medieval philosophy and human thinking.

### *The Universalia Struggle and Conflict*

For the one group the common universal conceptualization represents the reality of things and stands over against concrete things. For the other group the concrete thing represents the reality so that the common universal concept and understanding is only for and within our human intellect real, they are only names (indicators of meaning and intellectual significance, Latin *nomen*, nominalism) (see the influence of Aristotle). Realism in scholastic thinking is linked with the priority of the common and universal idea and form over against the concrete reality of things (see the influence of Plato).

### *The Struggle and Conflict between Faith and Reason*

For Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), faith predominated and determined reason. Thus his famous viewpoint: without faith, no meaningful insight: *credo ut intelligam* – I believe in order to understand (Störig 1972<sup>2</sup>:230). However, in order to prove the existence of God, one needs the intellect. The comprehension of reason (concepts) gives access to the essence of being. The ultimate representative of reason is God and can lead to the proof of the reality of that concept. In this way the existence of God can be proved (the so called ontological proof of God).

Abaelard (1079-1142) was convinced that the foundation of our faith is reason. In opposition to Anselm he proposed the principle of *intellego ut credam* – I understand so that I can believe. One needs to know oneself so that one's position before God is not portrayed by good works but by one's inner attitude guided by reason.

With reference to the *universalia* struggle and the formula of the realists: *universalia ante res* – the general concepts are prior to the things – and the nominalists: *universalia post res* – the concepts follow the things – the contribution of Aebelard was his view that the concepts are part and parcel of the things in themselves: *universalia in rebus*. Within the phenomenon one encounters the reality of the concept and its intellectual or rational meaning (Störig 1972<sup>2</sup>:233).

### *Cosmology and the Principle of Cause and Effect: Causality*

Medieval thinking cannot be understood without taking into consideration the influence of Aristotle.<sup>2</sup> Arabic philosophy played an important role in the understanding of God. For Avicenna (980-1037) matter does not emanate directly from God. It is an eternal principle over against God. As for Aristotle, God is for him the cause of all movement and motion. In Himself God cannot move and is in principle immutable. It is from within God that the forms emanate and are realized within matter. Form and potential precede the formation of reality. The form or idea is as potentiality an eternal cause. The implication for anthropology is that the individual soul is mortal while immortality belongs to the supra realm of the human spirit (*Geist*).

In medieval thinking causality was linked to systematic knowledge as an objective structure imposed by the human reason. Thomas Aquino in his *Summa* utilized the notion of objective knowledge to develop the so called rational proofs for the existence of God. That God exists is self-evident for the human reason. One proof of evidence is the fact that all movement emanates from God's immutability, the source and cause of all movement (Störig 1972<sup>2</sup>:247). All of teleology is determined by the notion that all meaningful life is predestined and caused by God (the causal reasonable factor, the principle of all logic and rational explanation). The further implication is that the human soul is in essence an disembodied soul. The human soul is pure form (*nous*) without matter. The human soul as spirit is therefore an independent and immortal substance (Störig 1972<sup>2</sup>:249). The real essence of the human being, our core nature, is the *nous*.

Undoubtedly, this core notion of rationality and the predominant position of the human mind in anthropology fueled the principal formula of the sixteenth philosopher René Descartes: *cogito ergo sum*: I think therefore I am. Descartes scrutinized the human soul by

<sup>2</sup> "Averroes's interpretation of Aristotle's *On the Soul*, for example sparked enormous controversy about the nature of intellect, and Avicenna's metaphysical views helped shape the famous later medieval debates about universals and about the nature of the distinction between essence and existence" (MacDonald & Kretzmann 1998:5).

means of his basic methodology of skepticism and doubt. Radical doubt implies that I cannot doubt that I doubt, and to doubt is to think and to reason. The only certainty is the human I and self as a thinking being, the clarity of the human mind: *claire et distincte* (The most purest idea: the idea of God, the cause of all movement) (Störig 1972<sup>2</sup>:305).

From the above outline and brief sketch on the connection between medieval philosophy and anthropology one can conclude that two paradigms dominated the thinking of the middle ages: metaphysics and substantiality (ontology).<sup>3</sup> Form determines matter; the soul the body; God (*Nous*, the agent and final cause of human life) all movement and change. In terms of metaphysics, form determines matter; the rational soul (the seat of all human capacities) embodies the whole of human being.<sup>4</sup>

To conclude: medieval philosophy portrayed a static and deterministic world view dominated by substantialism, rationalism and positivism. Due to metaphysical thinking reality resides in existing immutable entities. The human soul became a fixed substance that is open to the scrutiny of nous. Substance can be analyzed by the reason. Substance is independent in itself (*in se*) and determines epistemology, the processes of knowing and human knowledge (*ad nos*) (Van Peursen 1964<sup>2</sup>: 80).

### **Intentionality: Towards a Hermeneutical Anthropology of Appearance (Phenomenology) and Contextuality**

It is always difficult to identify the paradigms which shifted world views and contributed to dramatic changes in our being human and meaningful human self-understanding. With reference to the previous outline regarding the dominating paradigms of medieval philosophy, i.e. the paradigms of metaphysics, substantial thinking, rationalism and causality, I want to argue that the most influential philosopher that contributed to the shifting of paradigms (from medieval thinking into modernistic thinking) was René Descartes. At the end of medieval times, together with the upcoming humanism, Descartes posed the method of doubt. It fuelled the *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment) and prepared the way for the so called secularization during the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Descartes' critical method of fundamental doubt prepared the way for processes of deconstruction in the twentieth century. Later on the processes of industrialization, as well as the upcoming of capitalism and a market driven economy, contributed to the paradigmatic shifting from the functional era into the era of systemic thinking, networking and post modern deconstruction.

#### *Phenomenology and Intentionality (Eidos: Meaning)*

In order to deal with our current world view, it should be pointed out that besides the Cartesian revolution of Descartes, the phenomenology as introduced by Edmund Husserl played a decisive role in the shifting of paradigms.

Immanuel Kant's concept of a transcendental factor within the human conscious mind, the '*Bewusstsein überhaupt*', as well as the idealism of Fichte and Hegel, brought about a Copernican revolution regarding metaphysics, they shifted the beyond into a kind of

<sup>3</sup> "The common metaphysical ground of medieval philosophy holds that at the most general level reality can be divided into substances and accidents. Substances ... are independent existents and therefore ontologically fundamental. Corporeal substances (and perhaps also certain incorporeal substances) are constituted from matter and form" (MacDonald & Kretzmann 1998:8-9).

<sup>4</sup> "All medieval philosophers, therefore, held broadly dualist positions according to which the soul and body are fundamentally distinct" (MacDonald & Kretzmann 1998).

universal world human I-consciousness: the Reason (Van Peursen 1967:50-51). In line with the empiricism of Locke, Berkeley and Hume, the source of knowledge is not any more the beyond of classical metaphysical thinking but the sensory data of experience, feelings, perceptions and observation. The field of phenomena became the focal point of philosophical reflection.

In order to understand the new approach of hermeneutics, one must understand that within methodology, phenomenology brought about a different understanding of reality and the cosmos. The question is no longer what is the essence of the matter in itself, a kind of objective '*Ding an sich*' (Kant), an ontology of being (as substance), but the interpretation of things. The focus on interpretation of appearances implies a shift from being to meaning, from ontology to anthropology, from reason to phenomena, from rational speculation to empirical observation, from absolute definition to relative experience.

The core principle in Husserl's phenomenology was what he called a reduction of essence (*eidos*; eidetic Reduction). Within the evident phenomena one starts to trace back the meaning of things. In order to perform the process of knowing, all existent knowledge about reality should be placed temporarily into brackets (*Einklammerung*, bracketing) (*epochè*: to reserve and to suspend). As Thévenaz (1962:43) pointed out: due to the shift towards the intentionality of consciousness, meaning becomes a qualitative issue related to human observation and experience. Phenomenology describes a movement from objective explanation to experiential description and interpretation. Reality resides in the essence of meaning as related to intentionality.<sup>5</sup>

### *Hermeneutics: The Intentionality of Texts within the Existential Realm of Vital Contexts*

The notion of intentionality and the shift towards meaning and interpretation introduced the paradigm of hermeneutics which is becoming the most fundamental paradigm for knowledge within the realm of spirituality and the human sciences/*humaniora*. Human knowledge is not anymore dependent on the scientific paradigm of verification (factual rational proof) or falsification (the possibility of proofing a statement to be false refutation) but the analyses of different texts within contexts. In this regard theories developed by Popper (Popper 1982<sup>2</sup>) (critical contesting and correcting) and Kuhn (1970) (knowledge is embedded in historical and contextual contexts) opened the way to include probability and uncertainty as fundamental to human knowledge (see Van Peursen 1980:70-82).

The philosophers Gadamer and Ricoeur made a further contribution by introducing the question of hermeneutics into the theory of science. Besides the factor of explanation/ argumentation (*erklären*), science also operates according to meaningful and qualitative understanding (*verstehen*). Hermeneutics can be described as the attempt to penetrate, through the words of a text, into the hidden meaning or intention of a text (Van Peursen 1980:76).<sup>6</sup> Understanding is a process of participation in the reality in which culture and tradition play a decisive role. In other words, understanding is an existential event which was given originally to the structure of our being. Knowledge is becoming a structure of our being in this world. Understanding is an existential event (M Heidegger 1963; L Versényi 1965).

<sup>5</sup> "In this *Wesenschau*, the essence (*Wesen*) is neither ideal reality nor psychological reality, but ideal intention (*visée*), intentional object of consciousness, immanent to consciousness" (Thévenaz 1962:44).

<sup>6</sup> On the link between a theological hermeneutics and a philosophical hermeneutics, see Smit 1998:299-302.

Hermeneutics became a fundamental feature of thinking in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, globalization and post modernity.<sup>7</sup> When one can describe modernist thinking as the rationality of positivism (introduced by Descartes), post modern thinking is critical reflection within the relativity of experiential intentionality. It proposes the notion of the relativity of human knowledge. Knowledge is embedded in existential and cultural contexts. With reference to the latter, one can describe the cultural context of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and the first part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as globalization.

One of the special features of globalization<sup>8</sup> is the fact that knowledge and meaning is framed by a systemic process of social and economic networking.<sup>9</sup> Due to our market driven economy and the impact of big companies, the digitalization of communication, the impact of film and media on meaning, meaning in itself has become a 'website'. Intentionality is not anymore related to the subjectivity of human consciousness but to intersubjectivity of interrelatedness. Intentionality has become the cyberspace of virtual reality as projected by the internet and prescribed by film and media. Intentionality has become a system of virtual interconnectedness and digital networking.

What is the implication of this dramatic paradigm shift from the substantial thinking of medieval philosophy to the networking thinking of hermeneutical philosophy on anthropology and the spiritual realm of Christian thinking and theology?

My basic hunch and response is: the reframing of *cura animarum* into the qualitative and systemic understanding of the human soul (position, attitude/*habitus*) within an existential life-approach (*cura vitae*).

### **From *Cura Animarum* to *Cura Vitae*: The Quest for a Holistic Spirituality in Pastoral Care and the Healing of Life**

At the end of the twentieth century pastoral care became more exposed to the concept of spirituality (Tieleman 1995<sup>2</sup>). *Cura animarum* was more and more interpreted and understood as spiritual care and spiritual direction. Already in the eighties K Leech emphasized the importance of spirituality for pastoral care. In his book *Spirituality and Pastoral Care* (1986a) he advocated for both a Christian spirituality with the emphasis on maturity (1986a:6), as well as a social spirituality (see also 1986(b):9). The focus fell on transcendence and the mystical component of our being human. It was argued that all human existence has a spiritual aspect (Leech 1986(a):xxvi). In this regard spiritual care linked with a very old tradition in Christianity – the so called desert fathers and their quest for God (Leech 1985:130). This rediscovery of the realm of interiority and transcendence (Thayer 1985:25) coincides with a discovery of the value of symbolic structures and religious

<sup>7</sup> Postmodernism is closely related to globalization. See Hermans 2003:20. Postmodernism refers to the epochal transition from modernism to the new era. Globalization refers to the expansion of space, namely beyond the confines of nation-state (Hermans 20-21). For the connection between individualistic freedom, plurality and the quest for personal freedom in postmodernism, see Bauman 1997. Postmodernism implies inter alia the shift from definition to operation (Bauman 1997:168). Robertson (2000:53) describes globalization as compression of the world. It refers to increasing socio-cultural density and to rapidly expanding consciousness. Stackhouse (2000: 30) refers to the multidimensionality of globalization. The contemporary term 'globalization' combines the notion of a worldwide, ordered place of habitation subject to transformation (Stackhouse 2000:22).

<sup>8</sup> For an in depth discussion, see Waters 1995:3. "A social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware they are receding."

<sup>9</sup> Networking refers to the mutual influence and dynamics of interconnected relations. Systemic refers to the notion that meaning entails more than the sum total of the different parts. The 'whole' is determined by the position of each part within the functional unit.

experience (Thayer 1985:29).<sup>10</sup> Due to the notion of spirituality the emphasis is less on self-actualization, behaviourist theories and the classical psychoanalytic theories of humanistic psychology (Thayer 1985:41-42), and more on the interconnectedness between life and transcendence, human existence and God. Spirituality became a search for 'meta-egoic' experience (Leech 1987).

Instead of the Western dualism and distinction between spirit and matter (see the argument on the features of medieval philosophy), spirituality has since the nineties and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century become, the standard formula for the theory and practice of 'life in the Spirit' and discipleship (Sheldrake 1995:514). Spirituality started to emphasize emotive expressions of intimacy with God within many acts of public worship and service (Drishill 1999:8).

Due to globalization and technology with its 'compression of time', a need for spiritual leadership developed. Secularization created a spiritual vacuum (Blackaby 2001:5-11). It is therefore no surprise why H Cox, the author of the *Secular City* (1965), revised his own theory on secularism. In his book, *Fire from heaven* (1995), he acknowledged that his projection in the sixties proved to be wrong. Instead of secularism that is endangering spirituality it is rather spirituality<sup>11</sup> that is destroying secularism. "Today it is a secularity, not spirituality, that may be headed for extinction" (Cox 1995:xv).

### *Paradigm Shifts within Care and Counselling*

With paradigms<sup>5</sup> are meant conceptual frameworks and schemata of interpretation reflecting philosophical world views, cultural constructs and various theoretical stances and perspectives. Capps (1984:51) describes paradigms as conceptual models for understanding texts and their meaning.

The most important paradigm shifts in theory formation for pastoral care giving to be identified are the following:

#### ▪ *The Shift from Individual Conversion and Personal Self-actualization towards a Systems Approach*

Within the tradition of *cura animarum*, soul care was mostly a pietistic, individualistic and private endeavour (see Mc Neill 1951). The emphasis nowadays is much more on a psycho-systemic approach.<sup>12</sup> "The nature of the human personality is understood in contextual rather than individualistic terms" (Graham 1992:19).

With a systems approach is meant an understanding of our being within the dynamic networking of relationships. This dynamics refers to the importance of attitude, space, value, meaning, and experience. In the words of Friedman (1985:24), the emphasis is on

<sup>10</sup> About the interplay between faith and experience within a theology of spirituality, see Ruhbach 1987:23-25; *sola experientia facit theologum*.

<sup>11</sup> To my mind, the most extensive research on spirituality has been done by Waaijman (2003<sup>4</sup>). He explains the complexity of the concept in its relationship to *nous* and *pneuma*, as well as to the biblical concepts of devotion (*eusebeia*), holiness, mercy/charity, and perfection (2003<sup>4</sup>:314-332). (See also Endres 2002: 143-155). According to Waaijman, spirituality is an exponent of the French *spiritualite* (Latin: *spiritualitas*) with roots in the Biblical field of meaning: *ruach/pneuma* (2003<sup>4</sup>:359). Spirituality represents both the divine perspective, as well as the human spirit. It includes ascetic and mystical experiences as related to both the Biblical tradition (*ruach*) and Hellenistic intuition and knowledge (*nous*). At stake is the relationship between the divine Spirit/*Pneuma* and the human spirit/soul within the reality of life.

<sup>12</sup> Individualism, a core feature of American culture, breeds self-preoccupation with self-fulfillment and narcissism, which is incompatible with a communal, perspective (Sperry 2002:1).



position rather than personality. Problems are therefore not necessarily located in the symptomatic patient but often in the structure of the system (1985:19). In a nutshell: “The components do not function according to their ‘nature’ but according to their position in the network” (Friedman 1985:15).

The advantage of a systems approach is that it promotes the concept of a holistic model in care and counselling. It brings about an understanding of interrelatedness within an interdisciplinary approach. Wholeness refers to health as a total integration between mind, body and spirit; between the individual and others, and between the individual, nature and God. It refers to a maximum quality of life, integrity and integration.

▪ *The Shift from Psychoanalyses to a Narrative Approach-storytelling*

The shift from psychoanalyses with its emphasis on past experiences as suppressed in the unconscious, towards a larger perspective was already argued by Gerkin (1997:51). This shift implied a movement away from ‘the culture of the self’ (1997:49), and the ‘privatization of religious life’ (1997:48), as well as the predominant ‘psychotherapeutic pastoral model’ (1997:98), towards telling the stories of our lives within the framework of the Christian story (1997:97-99). A communal model of care is proposed (1997:104) together with a cultural-linguistic<sup>13</sup> model.

The narrative approach work with the proposition: ‘I perform, therefore I am,’ rather than the rationalist stance: ‘I think, therefore I am’ (Aldridge 2000:13). Meaning is therefore acted out in life patterns as reflected in relationships. “Symptoms are signs that have to be both observed and interpreted in their performance. Stories give a sense of pattern, a way of speaking, perceiving and existing, whereas concepts tend to nominalize” (Aldridge 2000:14).

Storytelling refers to narrative conversations as embedded within the broader social context of the stories by which we live our lives (Morgan 2000:3-9).

Narrative therapy operates with the following basic assumption: the person is not the problem, nor is the problem the problem, but the person’s relationship with the problem is the problem. Narrative counsellors therefore engage in externalizing conversations (see Roth & Epston 1996:5-12) whereby they separate the problem from the person and give it a name. Through a process of deconstruction a person is invited to examine the cultural content and context of the dominant stories and to consider the possibility that things could be different. The emphasis in a narrative approach shifts from systems as such, to the embeddings of stories within social constructions, i.e. beliefs, values, institutions, customs, labels, laws, divisions of labour, and the like that make up our social realities, constructed by the members of a culture as they interact with one another from generation to generation and day to day (Freedman & Combs 1996:16).

*From Substantial and Metaphysical Thinking to Hermeneutical Thinking*

Currently, the hermeneutical model is influencing methodology in the discipline of pastoral theology. In a substantial model the ‘what?’ question dominates our thinking. In terms of metaphysics it is an attempt to reason back towards a possible cause or explanation. Within theology this model can be called a propositionalist model.

<sup>13</sup> “The cultural-linguistic model of doing theology is the most fundamental model by which a community can care for individuals and families. It has the unique ability to provide people with a storied context of ultimate meaning for their lives” (Gerkin 1997:110).

Within traditional orthodoxy there was the attempt to propose informative propositions, explanatory principles or objectivistic truth claims about the essence of things (for example of God and the human soul). The model describes what is and is often in opposition to a model that speaks about God or ultimate reality in metaphoric or poetic language (Gerkin 1997:106).

In a pastoral hermeneutics the focus is becoming rather the meaning of the dynamic encounter between God and human beings than the origin of things and humans. Within religious and spiritual experiences there is a certain grammar, a way of speaking, an interpretive schema that structures one's understanding of oneself and one's world. The role of the pastor and counsellor is then to dialogue between life stories and the Christian story. The role of the pastor is to become more an interpretive guide (Gerkin 1997:113). "In short, I mean the role of interpretive guidance as it relates to facilitating the dialogical process between life stories and the Christian story of how life is to be lived" (Gerkin 1997:114).

To conclude: the new emphasis on a hermeneutical model; the attempt to interpret stories and to connect life to spiritual issues; the value of metaphors and symbols and their relatedness to meaning and the ultimate; the value of understanding life events in terms of systems and dynamic social networks and constructions, demand a re-assessment of the notion of 'soul' in a hermeneutical approach to pastoral anthropology. Hence the attempt to shift from the paradigm of *cura animarum* to the paradigm of *cura vitae* (Louw 2008). How does such a paradigm shift influence anthropology and our understanding of 'soul'?

### 'Soul' from Some- 'thing' (Substance) to Some- 'being'

There exists a deep seated conviction within traditional Christian spirituality that soul refers to the inner world or the inward part of our being. It represents consciousness and sub-consciousness, and refers to a spiritual realm within the body.

The word for psyche (*psuché*) is derived from a root which means breath, or to breathe. The Hebrew word for soul, *néfesh* (Gen 2:7) means breath, exhalation, the principle of life/being (Seidl 1999:751, Brown 1778:679-680). *Néfesh* denotes a principle of life which makes a body, whether human or beast, into a living being. When *néfesh* is translated as *psyché*, it signifies that which is vital in a human being in the broader sense. In combination with heart (*kardia*) and mind (*nous*), soul in the New Testament describes the seat of life or even life itself. It represents the person in the broadest sense and indicates the quality of life experiences. Soul therefore does not refer in the first place to a different anthropological category, but to a different mode of being (Harder in Brown 1978:684).

The use of the term soul in Scripture refers to wholeness and not to a different substance as in the case of medieval philosophy. Plato for example provides us with the idea that a soul can be deprived of its body; that it does not come fully into its own until it has been separated from the body, and that it is immortal. The body is therefore merely clothing for the soul, a kind of prison from which it should escape and be liberated.

Besides this dualism, the soul was also viewed in Greek philosophy as an inspiring force. For Aristotle soul indicates movement within the human being and operates as a vapour of warmth.

Both Plato and Aristotle estimated the soul as having unique qualities. Without the soul as the foundation, *sophia* (wisdom) and *nous* (understanding), would have no chance to develop (Plato). Aristotle regarded the soul as divided into nourishment, perception and thought.

For the Greeks, the soul can be trained, according to its various capabilities. The most important thing, however, as Socrates teaches, is to cultivate or take care of (*epimeleisthai*) the soul, rather than to attain wealth or happiness. “One could say that here, for the first time, we find the concept of the care of souls” (Harder in Brown 1978:678). Socrates is not concerned with speculation about the soul, its life before and after its time in the body. Soul acquires a completely new meaning. Since it is a spirit capable of thought and reason, as well as moral awareness, the care of the soul is service of God (Harder in Brown 1978:678). The soul is part of cosmos; it is a life reality and should be lived in harmony with the events of life.

What we can gather from the ancient world is that soul is a dynamic principle within our existence. It should be viewed in close connection to feelings and the cognitive principle in being. Due to its capability for wisdom, soul is linked to morality and virtues. Both competence (*epitédeumata*) and deeds (*praxeis*) determine the functions of soul. The qualities of these functions were linked to the principle of justice (*dikaïosynē*) and the capability of discernment (*phronesis*).<sup>14</sup>

As assessed by Malina & Neyrey (1996:24), happenstances of life are directly related to the accomplishments and deeds of both the body and the soul. One can therefore conclude that soul is indeed an inherent part of a human person's existence and the daily occurrences in life. “*Nephesh* does not say what a person has, but who the person is who receives life” (Anderson 2003:30).

The question now to be posed is: can these perspectives be incorporated within a Biblical understanding of soul?

Our interpretation of both *nēfesh* and *psychē* should reckon with the fact that the world view of the Old and the New Testament functioned within a total different context and paradigm. When we read Scripture we are bound to our own cultural context. It is therefore obvious that different schemata of interpretation will play a role in our findings.

For our discussion it is important to mention that both *nēfesh* and *psychē* in Scripture refer to life and its quality (Seidl 1999:751) (see Mt 16:25, Joh 15:13).<sup>15</sup>

According to Acts 2:41 soul refers to the whole of our human existence. To understand *nēfesh* as an enfleshed principle for purposeful life, as an embodiment of a life force, can be very near to the original intention of the authors of the Bible.

In some places in the New Testament soul is connected to spirit (*pneuma*). For Paul there is interconnectedness between soul and spirit.<sup>16</sup> In some texts the meaning is actually more or less the same. When Paul indeed refers to spirit/*pneuma* he wishes to describe a very unique relationship between God and human beings. With reference to Christology, soul then becomes an indication and expression of a very specific state of being due to

<sup>14</sup> “Accomplishments (*epitédeumata*) and deeds (*praxeis*) looked to body, soul and the happenstances of life. Considerations of the body (*kata soma*) included beauty, strength, agility, might and health; those of the soul (*kata psychēn*) looked to justice (*dikaïosynē*), wisdom (*phronēsis*), moderation rooted in a sense of shame (*sôphrosynē*), manly courage (*andreia*), and respect for those who control one's existence (*pistis, eusebeia*). Happenstances of life, that is, fate or fortune (*kata tychēn*), treated power (*dynastēria*), wealth (*ploutos*), friends (*philoī*), children, their number and beauty, as well as fame and fortune, length of life, happy death” (Malina & Neyrey 1996:24).

<sup>15</sup> For the connection between soul and life, see Naurath 2003:100. “Seele bezeichnet das Lebendigsein, die Vitalität und die Lebensenergie des Menschen, die gerade auch in Schmerz und Verzweiflung das Eigentliche des Menschen ausmacht. Der Mensch besitzt nicht eine Seele sondern er ist seine Seele. Die Seele konstituiert den Menschen in seinem Personsein, das von Gottesbeziehung her bestimmt ist” (Naurath 2003:100).

<sup>16</sup> To speculate about a psychology of personhood by Paul, is to overestimate his use of the concept. See Malina & Neyrey 1996:14-15).

justification (salvation) within the group dynamics of *koinonia*.<sup>17</sup> One can say that *pneuma* indicates the condition of the new person in Christ over against the condition of the old person, captured by death and sin.

In conclusion one can say that ‘soul’<sup>18</sup> refers to a collective identity within the corporate structures of life, i.e. marriage, family, life as a whole, i.e. to clan and society. Soul reflects human embodiment<sup>19</sup> within a network of social systems and spiritual forces and designates a qualitative stance in life.<sup>20</sup>

The outcome of my argument is an inclusive and normative anthropology. Anthropology determines the notion of healing due to the fact that the questions “how do I see myself?” and “Who is the other?” determine one’s approach to life, as well as the processes of positioning. Our care and support to one another are interpretative activities and influenced by perceptions and prejudice. That is why a hermeneutical competence can be seen as the basic skill of caregivers. Our argument can be summed up in the following quotation: “‘Soul’ is not a thing, but a quality or a dimension of experiencing life and ourselves within the realm of existential realities. It has to do with depth, values, relatedness, heart and personal substance” (Moore 1992:5).

## In Conclusion

One can conclude: a hermeneutical and systemic approach (see Meininger 2001:24) to *cura vitae* implies in pastoral care and counselling the paradigmatic shift from the medieval paradigm of substantial and metaphysical thinking to the networking thinking of hermeneutics. For a holistic approach in *cura vitae* it implies the following:

- Soul (*néfesh*) is a systemic issue. It should be assessed and interpreted within the (*néfesh*) dynamics of interactive life relationships (networking) (see Dunn 1998).
- Soul is a qualitative concept. It indicates a mode of being (attitude, aptitude, *habitus*, position) and should be interpreted within processes of meaning-giving and meaning-receiving.
- Soul is viewed in terms of the happenstances of life. It describes a specific stance within life events. It connects with choices and reveals character (*epitêdeumata*). It also connects with acts which express intention and motivation/driving forces (*praxeis*). In this regard a relational understanding of soul is not also closer to Biblical thinking; it also links with some features of anthropology in African spiritualities.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> “Our hypothesis is that first century Mediterranean persons were strongly group-embedded collectivist persons. Since they were group-orientated, they were ‘socially’-minded as opposed to ‘psychologically’-minded. They were attuned to the values, attitudes and beliefs of their in-group, with fate due to generation and geography” (Malina & Neyrey 1996:16).

<sup>18</sup> “By the psyche I understand the totality of all psychic processes, both conscious as well as unconsciousness; whereas by soul, I understand a definitely demarcated function-complex that is best characterized as a ‘personality’” (Jung 1946:588).

<sup>19</sup> Our argument for soul as embodiment, and as an indication of the quality of happenstances in life within the processes of networking (soulfulness), does not deny the notion of the uniqueness of the individual, nor the experience of autonomy as a unique way of being human; i.e. the experience of mine (Meininger 2001:17).

<sup>20</sup> The conviction of KR Popper (1982:273) is that our being human is more complicated than we think. He favours duality over against a fixed monism. For him a human being is the embodiment of an ‘I’, a self and spirit. He poses the following question: “Aber kann man die Beziehung zwischen dem Leib (dem physischen Zustand) verstehen?” (1982:274).

<sup>21</sup> In his book, Pastoral care to the sick in Africa, AA Berinyuu (1988:5) states: In Africa, there is no division and/or differentiation between the animate and inanimate, between the spirit and matter, between living and non-living, dead and living, physical and metaphysical, secular and sacred, the body and the spirit, etc. Most

- Soul designates a systemic network of functional positions which describe the mechanics of the human person. Within these positions, soul signifies vocation and a sense of directedness and significance. In relationship with God it signifies our understanding of God as enfleshed in behaviour and social interaction (spirituality). As such it creates an intimate space of holistic healing.

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Africans generally believe that everything (human beings included) is in constant relationship with one another and with the invisible world, and that people are in a state of complete dependence upon those invisible powers and beings. Hence, Africans are convinced that in the activities of life, harmony, balance or tranquillity must constantly be sought and maintained. Society is not segmented into, for example, medicine, sociology, law, politics and religion. Life is a liturgy of celebration for the victories and/or sacrifices of others. See also Bellagamba 1987.

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